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Tips for Travelers to Central and South America

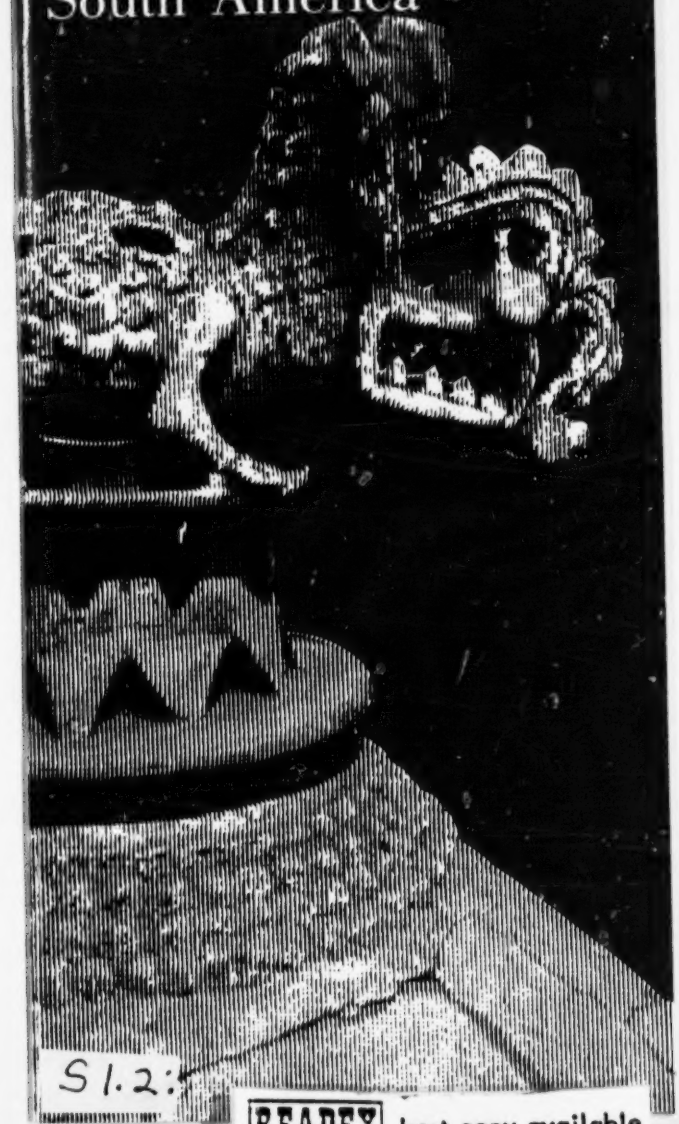

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Table of Contents

1 Travel Advisories
2 Getting In and Getting Out
3 Restrictions on Minors
4 Bringing Your own Car, Plane, or Boat
5 Health
7 Safety Tips—Crime
8 Safety Tips—Civil Unrest
8 Drug Offenses
9 Photography
9 U.S. Wildlife Regulations
9 Shopping for Antiques
10 Dual Nationality
11 Adopting a Child Abroad
11 Additional Information on Certain Countries
- Belize
- Brazil
- Chile
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Nicaragua
- Panama
- Suriname

14 Foreign Embassies in the United States
15 U.S. Embassies and Consulates Abroad

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Tips for Travelers to Central and South America

Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

Travelers to Central and South America are usually welcomed with courtesy and warmth. There is great diversity in the region—you can visit some of the largest cities in the world as well as some of the most unspoiled primitive environments. You can have a wonderful trip; however, there are some precautions to take.

Please note that travel to Mexico and the Caribbean is covered in separate publications. See the last page of this pamphlet.

Travel Advisories

The Department of State issues travel advisories concerning serious health or security conditions that may affect U.S. citizens. Current advisories are available at the 13 regional passport agencies in the United States and from the Citizens Emergency Center, Room 4811, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520, (202) 647–5225. Advisories are also available at U.S. embassies and consulates abroad.

At the time of publication, travel advisories are in effect for Columbia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, and Suriname. Some of the dangers covered in these advisories are guerrilla or terrorist activity, banditry, and areas under control of narcotics producers. If you plan to

travel to one of these countries, check with the Citizens Emergency Center or the nearest passport agency to see if a travel advisory is still in effect.

As you travel, keep abreast of local news coverage. If you plan more than a short stay in one place, expect to travel to an area where communications are poor, or if you are in an area experiencing civil unrest or natural disaster, you are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. Registration takes only a few moments, and it may be invaluable in case of an emergency. Remember also to leave a detailed itinerary and the number of your passport with a friend or relative in the United States.

Getting In and Out

U.S. citizens must have a valid U.S. passport to travel to all countries in Central or South America, except for Costa Rica. (Costa Rica requires proof of U.S. citizenship, such as a birth certificate, and proof of identity.) Visa requirements for U.S. citizens vary from country to country: some countries do not require a visa for a tourist stay of 90 days or less; for some you need to obtain a tourist card from the airline office or the destination airport; for other countries you must obtain a visa in advance from the country's embassy or consulate. Some countries have additional entry requirements such as proof of sufficient funds or proof of onward or return tickets.

In addition, all South American countries and most Central American countries require a departure tax. If you are departing to a neighboring country, the tax may be small, but, if you are returning to the U.S., the tax could be as high as $50 per person. **Be sure to have enough money at the end of your trip to be able to get on the plane.**

For authoritative information on a country's entry and exit requirements, contact its embassy or consulate (see list of foreign

embassies on page 14). When you make your inquiries, ask about:

- Where to obtain a tourist card or visa.
- Visa price, length of validity, and number of entries.
- Financial requirements—proof of sufficient funds, proof of onward or return ticket.
- Special requirements for children traveling alone or with only one parent (see below).
- Yellow fever immunization or other health requirements.
- Currency regulations—how much local or dollar currency can be brought in or out.
- Export/import restrictions.
- Departure tax.

Restrictions on Minors

Many countries impose restrictions on minor children who travel alone, with only one parent, or with someone who is not their parent. A child must present written authorization for travel from the absent parent, parents, or legal guardian. If the parent or guardian traveling with the child is the sole custodian, the court order granting custody may, in some cases, serve as the authorization document.

If any of this applies to you, inquire about the following at the embassy or consulate of the country your child plans to visit:

- The age of majority at which the restriction no longer applies (e.g., age 15 in Argentina, age 18 in Brazil).
- The type of document that can overcome the restriction (e.g., court order, statement of absent parent or parents).
- Whether notarizing the document is sufficient or if it must also be authen-

ticated by the country's embassy or consulate.

- Whether the document must be translated.

Note: In Brazil, a child may travel with its father without authorization from the mother, but, if traveling alone or with its mother, must have notarized authorization from its father. A woman may authorize a child's travel in Brazil **only** when she is the sole legal parent or guardian.

Bringing Your Own Car, Plane, or Boat

If you plan to drive to Central or South America or arrive in a private plane or boat, contact the embassy or consulate of each country you plan to visit to learn what is required for entry and exit. You may not be able to enter certain countries unless you have had your vehicle documented at the embassy or consulate of the country before you left your country of residence.

Besides title of ownership, at most borders, you will need to show insurance coverage effective for the country you are entering. If your U.S. auto insurance does not cover you abroad, you can usually purchase insurance when you enter a country. In some countries, if you are involved in an accident that causes injury, you will automatically be taken into police custody until it can be determined who is liable and whether you have the insurance or financial ability to pay any judgment. Criminal liability may also be assigned if the injuries or damages are serious.

If you are a visitor, you will not ordinarily have to pay import duty on your car or other vehicle. You may, however, have to post a bond or otherwise satisfy customs officials that you

will not sell or dispose of the vehicle in the country.

Health

Information on health precautions for travelers can be obtained from local health departments, the U.S. Public Health Service, private doctors, or travel clinics. General guidance can also be found in the U.S. Public Health Service book, *Health Information for International Travel*, available for $4.75 from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

Review your health insurance policy. If it does not cover you abroad, consider purchasing insurance that does. Also consider obtaining insurance to cover the very high cost of medical evacuation in event of accident or serious illness.

Depending on your destination, immunization may be recommended against diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis, polio, rabies, typhoid, and yellow fever.

Malaria is found in rural areas of every country in the region, except Chile and Uruguay. Malaria prophylaxis *and* mosquito avoidance measures are recommended. When possible, avoid contact with mosquitoes from dusk to dawn by wearing long clothing and using insect repellent on exposed skin. Use a flying insect spray and a bed net in living quarters. Prophylaxis should begin 2 weeks before going to an area where malaria is endemic and should continue for at least 4 weeks after leaving. Chloroquine is the malaria prophylaxis most easily tolerated by the body. However, malaria resistant to chloroquine has been reported in an area beginning east of the Panama Canal and extending through northern South America as far south as the Amazon Basin. If you plan to visit this area, consult a medical expert to work out an additional prophylaxis. At times, however, malaria may break through any drug or drug combination.

If you develop chills, fever, and headaches while taking a malaria prophylaxis, seek medical attention promptly. Early treatment of malaria can be effective, but delaying therapy could have serious consequences.

Mosquito avoidance measures, if used day and night, may also help prevent other less prevalent insect-borne diseases found in parts of Central and South America such as Chagas' disease, dengue fever, leishmaniasis, and yellow fever.

Throughout most of Central and South America, fruits and vegetables should be washed with care and meats and fish thoroughly cooked. Problems of food contamination are less prevalent in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, and tap water is potable in those countries. Elsewhere water is generally not potable and should be boiled or chemically treated. Diarrhea caused by contaminated food is potentially serious. If it persists, seek medical attention.

Certain beaches in the region, including some at or near Lima, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, and Valparaiso are dangerously polluted. Avoid swimming at beaches that might be contaminated with human sewage or dog feces. Avoid swimming in fresh water in areas where schistosomiasis is found: Brazil, Suriname, and north-central Venezuela.

Visitors in the Andes may experience symptoms of altitude sickness such as insomnia, headache, and nausea. If you become sick, wait until your symptoms disappear before you attempt to go higher. Mountaineers should learn about the symptoms of high altitude pulmonary edema, a condition that is fatal unless remedied by immediate descent.

Another hazard of high altitudes is sunburn. Exposure to ultraviolet radiation increases not only as you approach the equator, but also as you ascend in altitude. Sunscreens may help prevent this.

Safety Tips—Crime

Like many large cities throughout the world, major cities in Central and South America experience assaults, robberies, and thefts. Visitors should take common sense precautions:

- Safety begins when you pack. Leave expensive jewelry behind. Dress conservatively; a flashy wardrobe or one that is too casual can mark you as a tourist. Use travelers checks, not cash. Leave photocopies of your passport personal information page and of your airline tickets with someone at home and carry an extra set of copies with you.
- Use a money belt or a concealed money pouch for passports, cash, and other valuables.
- In a car, keep doors locked, windows rolled up, and valuables out of sight. A common trick is for a thief to reach through a car window and grab a watch from a person's wrist or a purse or package from the seat while you are driving slowly or stopped in traffic.
- When you leave your car, try to find a guarded parking lot, lock the car, and keep valuables out of sight.
- When walking, avoid dark alleys, crowds, and marginal areas of cities. Do not stop if you are approached on the street by strangers, including street vendors and beggars. Be aware that women and small children, as well as men, can be pickpockets or purse snatchers. Keep your billfold in an inner front pocket, carry your purse tucked securely under your arm, and wear the shoulder strap of your camera or bag across your chest. To guard against thieves on motorcycles, walk away from the curb, carrying your purse away from the street.

- Whenever possible, do not travel alone. If you travel in isolated areas, go with a group or a reputable guide.
- Avoid travel at night.
- Do not take valuables to the beach.

Any U.S. citizen who is criminally assaulted should report the incident to the local police and to the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate (see list at end of pamphlet).

Safety Tips—Civil Unrest

Several countries in Central and South America have areas of instability or war zones that are off-limits to visitors without special permits. Others have similar areas that are open but surrounded by security check points where travelers must show their passport or tourist card. Always carry your papers with you, and do not overstay the validity of your visa or tourist card.

Avoid public demonstrations. American citizens have been arrested when local authorities have thought they were participating in civil demonstrations. If you are detained or arrested for this or any reason, ask to speak with a U. S. consular officer.

Drug Offenses

Most Central and South American countries strictly enforce laws against the use, possession, and sale of narcotics. Foreigners arrested for possession of even small amounts of narcotics are generally charged and tried as international traffickers. There is no bail, judicial delays are lengthy, and you can spend 2 to 4 years in prison awaiting trial and sentencing. If you carry prescription drugs, keep them in their original container, clearly labeled with the doctor's name, pharmacy, and contents. You may wish to check with the embassy of the

country you plan to visit for specific customs requirements for prescription drugs.

Photography

Be cautious when taking pictures. Local authorities in Central and South American countries consider *all* airports, police stations, military locations, oil installations, harbors, mines, and bridges to be security-related. Photography of demonstrations or civil disturbances is also usually prohibited. Tourists have had their film confiscated and have been detained for trying to take these types of pictures. When in doubt about whether you can take a picture, ask first.

U.S. Wildlife Regulations

Endangered species and products made from them may not be brought into the United States. The penalty is confiscation and a possible fine. These items are prohibited from import: virtually all birds originating in Brazil, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Venezuela; furs from spotted cats; most lizard-skin products from Brazil and Paraguay; many snakeskin products from Brazil, Ecuador, and Paraguay; skins from the Orinoco crocodile; and all sea turtle products.

Shopping for Antiques

Most countries in Central and South America control the export of objects from their pre-Columbian and colonial heritage. Some countries claim ownership of all such material and consider the export of antiques, without the permission of the government, to be an act of theft. In addition, under U.S. law, importers of all pre-Columbian monumental and architectural sculpture, murals, and certain archaeological and ethnological materials are required to provide proof to the U.S. Customs Service that these artifacts are legally exported from

the country of origin. Beware of purchasing artifacts unless they are accompanied by an export permit issued by the government of origin.

Dual Nationality

Some countries in Central and South America do not recognize acquisition of U.S. citizenship unless the naturalized U.S. citizen renounces his or her original nationality at an embassy or consulate of the country of origin. A person born in the United States of a parent or parents who were citizens of another country may also be considered by that country to be their national. If arrested, a dual national may be denied the right to communicate with the U.S. embassy or consulate. Dual nationals may also be forced to serve in the military of their former country, or they may not be allowed to depart the country when their visit is over.

If you are a naturalized U.S. citizen, a dual national, or have any reason to believe another country may consider you its national, check with the embassy of that country as to your citizenship status and any obligations you may have while visiting there. When you research your citizenship status, bear in mind that the purpose of your planned trip can affect your status. Your acquired U.S. citizenship may be recognized by your former country if you only visit there. If, however, you take up residence, the country may consider you as having resumed your former nationality. This can happen even if the embassy of the country has stamped a visa in your U.S. passport.

Dual nationals should also be aware that they may be required to use a passport from their country of origin in order to enter or leave that country. The U.S. Government does not object to the use of a foreign passport in such situations. U.S. citizens may *not*, however, use a foreign passport to enter or leave the United States.

If you have any questions about dual nationality, contact the Office of Citizens Consular Services, Room 4817, Department of State, Washington, DC 20520, (202) 647–3712.

Adopting a Child Abroad

Because of scandals over the illegal activities of some adoption agencies and attorneys both in the United States and abroad, U.S. citizens have recently experienced difficulties when attempting to adopt children from Central or South America. Several countries in the region have either outlawed adoptions by foreigners or passed a law requiring formal court adoption of the child in the country before the child is permitted to emigrate to the United States. Although this has resulted in adoptions less likely to be challenged from a legal standpoint, it has made the process more difficult and time consuming.

U.S. citizens interested in adopting a child from a country in Central or South America are encouraged to contact the U.S. embassy or consulate in the country involved, or, in the United States, the Department of State's Office of Citizen Consular Services, Inter-American Division, (202) 647–3712, to obtain information on the adoption process in that country.

Additional Information for Certain Countries

Belize

Belize enforces a strict policy of refusing admittance to persons who an immigration officer suspects of drug use.

Brazil

Obtain your visa in advance. Brazilian immigration authorities do not hesitate to require a traveler without a visa to leave on the next available flight.

Street crime can be a major problem in large cities in Brazil. Guard against it—see "Safety Tips" on page 7. In Sao Paulo, if you encounter difficulties or need emergency assistance, dial 190, radio police patrol, from any public telephone. No coin or token is needed for the call.

Chile

Anyone considering scientific, technical, or mountaineering expeditions to regions in Chile classified as frontier areas or to Antarctica must apply for authorization to a Chilean embassy or consulate a minimum of 90 days prior to the beginning of the expedition. The application will be forwarded to the Chilean government for decision. Chilean authorities reserve the right to request Chilean participation in foreign expeditions and require the submission of a post-expedition report on the activities undertaken and the results obtained.

Costa Rica

Although U.S. citizens do not need a passport to enter Costa Rica, it is a good idea that you have one, particularly if you plan to stay more than 30 days. Some Americans have experienced difficulties in cashing travelers checks without a passport. Costa Rica strictly enforces immigration rules. If you need to extend your visa, do so promptly with local authorities.

Ecuador

Travelers to the Galapagos Islands should be aware that there are few medical facilities on the islands and cruise ships may also offer only limited medical care. Moving about the islands in the equatorial heat requires physical exertion and may be debilitating to someone in poor health. Before traveling, you may wish to consult the U.S. Consulate General in Guayaquil for more information.

To travel to the Galapagos by private yacht, you must have a license from the Ecuadorian

Ministry of Defense. You may apply through an Ecuadorian embassy or consulate, but do so well in advance because approval can take from 1 to 3 months.

El Salvador

Pre-Hispanic artifacts from the Cara Sucia archaeological region are prohibited entry into the United States unless accompanied by proof that they were exported with the permission of the government of El Salvador.

Nicaragua

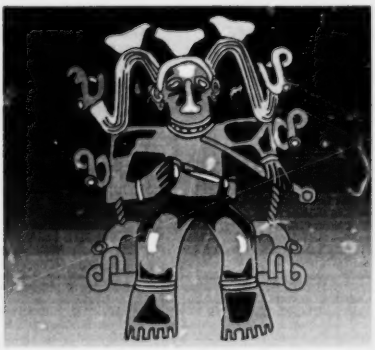
Upon entry, tourists may need to show $200 as proof of sufficient funds for their stay. They must exchange $60 upon arrival at the airport.

Panama

As of April 1989, a U. S. citizen must have a passport and a visa to enter Panama. Tourist cards may no longer be used by U. S. citizens. Travelers should bring cash and a major credit card because travelers checks may be difficult or impossible to cash.

Suriname

Visitors must buy 500 Suriname guilders (approximately $283) at the port of entry.



Foreign Embassies in the United States

Embassy of **ARGENTINA**
1600 New Hampshire Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 939–6400

Embassy of **BELIZE**
3400 International Drive, NW
Suite 2J
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 363–4505

Embassy of **BOLIVIA**
3014 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 483–4410

Embassy of **BRAZIL**
3006 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 745–2700

Embassy of **CHILE**
1732 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 785–1746

Embassy of **COLOMBIA**
2118 Leroy Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 387–8338

Embassy of **COSTA RICA**
1825 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 211
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 234–2945

Embassy of **ECUADOR**
2535 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 234–7200

Embassy of **EL SALVADOR**
2308 California Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 265–3480

FRENCH GUIANA
Embassy of France
4101 Reservoir Road, NW
Washington, DC 20007
(202) 944–6000

Embassy of **GUATEMALA**
2220 R Street, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 745–4952

Embassy of **GUYANA**
2490 Tracy Place, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 265–6900

Embassy of **HONDURAS**
4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 100
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 966–7700

Embassy of **NICARAGUA**
1627 New Hampshire
Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 387–4371

Embassy of **PANAMA**
2862 McGill Terrace, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 483–1407

Embassy of **PARAGUAY**
2400 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 483–6960

Embassy of **PERU**
1700 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 833–9860

Embassy of **SURINAME**
4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 108
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 244–7488

Embassy of **URUGUAY**
1918 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 331–1313

Embassy of **VENEZUELA**
2445 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 797–3800

U.S. Embassies and Consulates Abroad

Note: APO addresses may only be used for mail originating in the United States. When you use an APO address, do not include the local street address.

ARGENTINA
American Embassy
4300 Colombia, 1425
Buenos Aires
Tel: [54](1) 774–7611, 774–8811

Mailing address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34034

BELIZE
American Embassy
Gabourel Lane and Hutson Street
P.O. Box 286
Belize City
Tel: [501](2) 77161

BOLIVIA
American Embassy
Banco Popular Del Peru Bldg.
Corner of Calles Mercado and Colon
P.O. Box 425
La Paz
Tel: [591](2) 350–251, 350–120

Mailing address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34032

BRAZIL
American Embassy
Avenida das Nacoes, Lote 3
Brasilia
Tel: [55](6) 321–7272

Mailing address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34030

American Consulate General
Avenida Presidente Wilson 147
Rio de Janeiro
Tel: [55](21) 292–7117

Mailing address:
American Consulate General
APO Miami 34030

American Consulate General
Rua Padre Joao Manoel, 933, 01411
P.O. Box 8063
Sao Paulo
Tel: [55](11) 881–6511

Mailing address:
American Consulate General
APO Miami 34030

American Consulate
Rua Coronel Genuino, 421 (9th fl.)
Porto Alegre
Tel: [55](512) 264–288, 264–697

Mailing address:
American Consulate
APO Miami 34030

American Consulate
Rua Goncalves Maia, 163
Recife
Tel: [55](81) 221–1412

Mailing address:
American Consulate
APO Miami 34030

CHILE
American Embassy
Codina Bldg., 1343 Agustinas
Santiago
Tel: [56](2) 710–133

Mailing address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34033

COLOMBIA
American Embassy
Calle 38, No. 8–61
P.O. Box A.A. 3831
Bogota
Tel: [57](1) 285–1300, 285–1688

Mailing address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34038

American Consulate
Calle 77 Carrera 68
Centro Comercial Mayorista
P.O. Box A.A. 51565
Barranquilla
Tel: [57](5) 457–088, 457–560

Mailing address:
American Consulate
Barranquilla
APO Miami 34038

COSTA RICA
American Embassy
Frente al Centro Comercial de Pavas
San Jose
Tel: [506] 202–382, 203–939

Mailing address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34020

ECUADOR
American Embassy
Avenida 12 de Octubre y
Avenida Patria
P.O. Box 538
Quito
Tel: [593](2) 562-890

Mailing address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34039

American Consulate General
9 de Octubre y Garcia Moreno
Guayaquil
Tel: [593](4) 323-570

Mailing address:
American Consulate General
APO Miami 34039

EL SALVADOR
American Embassy
25 Avenida Norte No. 1230
San Salvador
Tel: [503] 267-100

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34023

FRENCH GUIANA
American Consulate General
14 Rue Blenac
B.P. 561
Fort-de-France 97206
Martinique
Tel: [596] 631-303

GUATEMALA
American Embassy
7-01 Avenida de la Reforma,
Zone 10
Guatemala
Tel: [502](2) 311-541

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34024

GUYANA
American Embassy
31 Main Street
Georgetown
Tel: [592](02) 54900

HONDURAS
American Embassy
Avenido La Paz
Tegucigalpa
Tel: [504] 323-120

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34022

NICARAGUA
American Embassy
Km. 4-1/2 Carretera Sur
Managua
Tel: [505](2) 668-010, 666-015

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34021

PANAMA
American Embassy
Apartado 6959
Panama 5
Rep. de Panama
Tel: [507] 271-777

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34002

PARAGUAY
American Embassy
1776 Mariscal Lopez Casilla Postal
402
Asuncion
Tel: [595](21) 201-041

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34036-0001

PERU
American Embassy
Consular Section
Grimaldo Del Solar 346
Miraflores
Lima 18
Tel: [51](14) 443-821

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34031

SURINAME
American Embassy
Dr. Sophie Redmondstraat 129
P. O. Box 1821
Paramaribo
Tel: [597] 72900, 76459

URUGUAY
American Embassy
Lauro Muller 1776
Montevideo
Tel: [598](2) 236-061, after
hours: 409-126

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34035

VENEZUELA
American Embassy
Avenida Francisco de Miranda and
Avenida Principal de la Floresta
Caracas 1060 A
Tel: [58](2) 284-7111, 284-6111

Mailing Address:
American Embassy
APO Miami 34037

American Consulate
Edificio Sofimara, Piso 3
Calle 77 Con Avenida 13
Maracaibo
Tel: [58](61) 84253, 83504

Mailing Address:
American Consulate
APO Miami 34037

Planning Another Trip?

For general travel information, the following pamphlets may be ordered for $1 each from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402:

— Your Trip Abroad
— A Safe Trip Abroad
— Travel Tips for Senior Citizens
— Tips for Americans Residing Abroad

Copies of the following publications in this series are also available for $1 each from the U.S. Government Printing Office:

- *Tips for Travelers to Sub-Saharan Africa*
- *Tips for Travelers to the Caribbean*
- *Tips for Travelers to the People's Republic of China*
- *Tips for Travelers to Cuba*
- *Tips for Travelers to Eastern Europe and Yugoslavia*
- *Tips for Travelers to Mexico*
- *Tips for Travelers to the Middle East and North Africa*
- *Tips for Travelers to South Asia*
- *Tips for Travelers to the USSR*

General visa information for these and other countries is available for Foreign Visa Requirements. This publication may be ordered for 50¢ from the Consumer Information Center, Dept. 438T, Pueblo, CO 81009.